

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Eliza Symonds Bell, May 27, 1876, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Mrs. Alexander Melville Bell. Cambridge, May 27th., 1876.(?) My dear Mrs. Bell:

If I had known how long it would be before I should see my picture I would have thanked you at once for the letter and note book which Mr. Kerr brought me. It was very kind of you to think of sending your own notes and studies to help me in struggling with the difficulties you have overcome. They have already been of assistance to me in following out my teachers directions and in studying the arrangement and effect of light and shade. I had no idea before how much thought and skill was necessary in artist's studies or how much the results depended upon the proper adjustment of bits of light and shade here and there. I send you by mail a book of hints on art by William Hunt which I thought you might like. I do not know if you have ever heard of Mr. Hunt, but he is much admired by Boston Artists and almost worshipped by his pupils. He is considered a man of great talent and originality, though conceited and over-bearing. There are some things in the book which seem forcible and suggestive, I would like to know what you think of it.

My beautiful picture came a few days ago, and I wrote to you at once, but was prevented from finishing my letter. It is perfectly lovely, I mean the picture not my letter! and I cannot begin to tell you how pleased and delighted I am or how much all my friends admire it. Every time I look at it I am fascinated by these beautiful arches and exquisite gothic windows. It seems almost like a peep into the old chapel itself, and I want to wander among those graceful columns and see what is beyond. The story of the Apprentice's pillar gives a pathetic interest to the whole, but I think I have a still greater pleasure in fancying Alec and his playfellows playing hide and seek in the old Chapel. I wonder if those two figures represent friends or relations. I wish my own sketches did not look so rough and

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coarse beside your delicate and graceful 2 picture. I am working on with the simplest sketches of still life, striving for effects and values. One sketch is a tin candle stick and end of candle with Papa's red razor box for color, another a ginger pot and a banana and yesterday two yellow lemons on a red plate with lumps of sugar and a black handled knife, — georgeous!

Please thank Mr. Bell for the photographs and pretty case. I am very glad to have an idea how you all look, it makes you seem less of strangers The faces are all so kind it is a great comfort for Alec has been frightening me by telling me how clever you all are, and I wonder you will do with such an ignoramus as I.

Cambridge is very lovely now, I would like to show you our pleasant home and the beautiful country around. It is full of blossoms now and the air fragrant. Our chickens have grown very large now though they never wander far from their mother's call. Berta is watching anxiously a nest of canaries into which Alec dropped a wild bird's egg. The little stranger was hatched first, a day or two ago and the old birds fed it faithfully but this morning it was found dead upon the bottom of the cage and the mother bird has deserted her nest and her four little blue eggs.

Mamma and I went to Alec's lecture at the Institute of Technology on Thursday. Alec looked very nice indeed every one said and I was very proud of him. He was as usual very quiet and self possessed and spoke very easily and distinctly. The lecture was a great success and his experiments were applauded several times, but, Alec will have told you all about it.

Alec showed me your letter to him in which you said you were anxious about his health and thought of writing to me about it. Alec certainly has not looked or felt well for some time past, but I hope now that the pressure that has weighed on him so long is removed he will have time to rest. He is going to take me out for a drive today and tomorrow is Sunday and I will take 3 him to church.

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Alec tells me you are expecting your brother whom you have not seen for many years. It must be delightful and yet sad to see one so near to you after so long a separation. I wonder if you will recognize anything of the boy you remember.

Thanking you again for your lovely presents, and with love to you and Mr. Bell and kindest regards to the Misses Symonds,

Affectionately yours, Mabel.